



June 7, 2002

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Rock Island, IL 61201

Telephone 309/793-5800, ex 522

Col. William J. Bayles
US Army Engineer District, Rock Island
Attention: Mr. Denny Lundberg
Clock Tower Building, PO Box 2004
Rock Island, Illinois 61201-2004

Dear Col. Bayles,

The Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee (UMRCC) has been actively following the progress of the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers System Navigation Study since it began more than ten years ago. The UMRCC welcomes the recent expansion of the study's purpose to include environmental sustainability as well as navigation. This change is an important first step toward achieving an Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS) that can sustain both commercial navigation and natural resource uses.

Although the UMRCC received a copy of the draft Interim Report for review and comment, we do not intend to provide any specific comments. Instead, we offer the attached report entitled "*A Preliminary Description of Habitat Objectives and Estimated Costs Needed to Achieve a Desired Level of Ecosystem Integrity on the Upper Mississippi River System*". This report is a follow-up to the UMRCC's year 2000 report, "*A River That Works and a Working River*". The "Working River Report" described nine critical habitat objectives needed to restore the natural resources of the Upper Mississippi River system to a sustainable condition. The enclosed report describes an initial assessment of specific habitat measures/actions (and estimated costs) needed to accomplish these nine objectives. We believe the report sets the stage for describing habitat needs for a sustainable environment and should become a focal point of the UMRS navigation feasibility study report.

Managing the UMRS for both navigation and natural resources will require cooperation between the people and entities who use it. Undoubtedly, there will be considerable discussion around the recommendations in the attached report, and the need to prioritize and develop an implementation plan will be part of this process. We look forward to this dialogue, and believe a continued collaborative approach between the UMRCC, Corps of Engineers, navigation industry, and other river partners will help balance the river's many uses and ensure a healthy ecosystem.

Encl.

Sincerely,



Mark Heywood, Chair
Upper Mississippi River
Conservation Committee

Responses to comments from Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee.

The Corps does not endorse the UMRCC report titled, “ A Preliminary Description of Habitat Objectives (and estimated costs) needed to achieve a desired level of ecosystem integrity on the Upper Mississippi River System” at this time, however it will serve as a valuable reference document for the feasibility study. The full evaluation of measures needed to achieve a desired ecosystem state will be included in the feasibility study. Tentative plans will be completed by October 2003 and shared with the stakeholders and public. A final recommendation will then be determined and documented in the final feasibility report scheduled for completion in 2004.